

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2124

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, April 4, 2005

Title: An act relating to increasing state participation in public transportation service and planning.

Brief Description: Increasing state participation in public transportation service and planning.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Murray, Jarrett, Simpson, Hudgins, Upthegrove, Sells, Wallace, Dickerson, B. Sullivan, Moeller, Kenney and Hasegawa).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/10/05, 52-42.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/24/05, 4/4/05 [DPA, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Jacobsen, Vice Chair; Poulsen, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Eide, Spanel and Weinstein.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Benson.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Esser and Mulliken.

Staff: Kimberly Johnson (786-7346)

Background: Within the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Division of Public Transportation and Rail (Division) has responsibility for providing financial and technical assistance to local transit agencies. The Division also provides support and planning for passenger rail and freight rail, including subsidies for AMTRAK Cascade Services.

State grant funds provide support for special needs services, rural mobility for areas without transit services, trip reduction grants, and vanpools. The Division also administers federal grant funds for rural public transportation, elderly and disabled service grants, intercity service, and reverse commute for job access.

Together with the DOT's Urban Planning Office, the Public Transportation Division represents the DOT in discussions with local and regional transportation planning and service agencies. They also provide coordinated system planning through the Washington Transportation Plan.

There are 26 transit systems currently operating in Washington. Transit agencies plan on a six-year cycle and plans must show how they will fund program needs. Regional

transportation planning organizations plan for the long term, providing guidance for transit investments.

Currently, statewide flexible funds apportioned to Washington under the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21, are distributed by a steering committee convened by the Governor.

Summary of Amended Bill: The division of public transportation within DOT is renamed the division of transit and public mobility.

Within the division of transit and public mobility, the Office of Transit Mobility (Office) is created. The primary goals of the Office are to connect and coordinate transit services and planning, and to maximize opportunities to use public transportation to improve the efficiency of transportation corridors.

The duties of the Office are enumerated, and include:

- developing a statewide strategic plan that creates common goals for transit agencies and reduces competing plans for cross-jurisdictional service;
- developing a park and ride lot program;
- encouraging long-range transit planning and providing expertise to improve linkages between regional transportation planning organizations and transit agencies;
- strengthening policies for inclusion of transit and transportation demand management strategies in route development and corridor plan standards, and budget proposals;
- providing staff assistance to the Regional Mobility Steering Committee established under this act;
- developing standards to integrate transit and demand management strategies with regional and local land use plans in order to reduce traffic and improve mobility and access; and
- participating in all aspects of corridor planning.

In forming the Office, the Secretary is directed to use existing resources to the greatest extent possible.

Local and regional transportation agencies are directed to adopt common transportation goals. The Office is given the responsibility to review local and regional plans to ensure the efficient integration of multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional planning.

The division of transit and public mobility will administer a capital grants program for local governments. In granting funds, the division of transit and public mobility must consider whether projects enhance the efficiency of regional corridors and reduce delay for people and goods.

This bill is null and void, unless SB 6103 passes by June 30, 2005.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The amended bill creates a new office of transit mobility under the newly renamed division of transit and public mobility.

The Regional Steering Committee is removed, and the division of transit and public mobility is required to administer the capital grants program for local governments. The grant program is funded through appropriations from the multimodal transportation account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The Legislature needs to force transit agencies to cover their operating costs. This bill is important for persons who need public transportation.

This bill raises public transportation awareness by requiring that the Director of the new Office report directly to the secretary of transportation.

Testimony Against: Federal flexible dollars have been distributed in the past via a committee convened by the Governor. This collaborative process worked very well and we think it should be used again. Previously these dollars went to local governments for rural arterials.

The Office of Transit Mobility should be required to work with ACCT. The regional steering committee has not representative for special needs transportation providers. The combination of and coordination of the special needs grant program works well in DOT, and this bill threatens that coordination with the creation of a new office separate from the existing division of public transportation. Special needs transportation is at a critical juncture in this state and we should continue to allow the system that we already have in place to move forward.

Who Testified: PRO: Judy Giniger, Department of Transportation; Heather Harper; Verney Mauldime; Paul W. Locke; Peter Thein, Washington Transit Association; Mike Harbour, Washington Transit Association. OTHER: Steve Gorcester, Transportation Improvement Board.

CON: Mike Shaw, Washington Association of Counties; Ashley Probart, Association of Washington Cities; Marilyn Mason-Plunkett, CTA-NW; Doreen Marchrone, CTA-NW; Pat Jones, Washington Public Ports Association.